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Hirat Journalists Advance Their Skills

The USAID enhances independent media in Hirat Province through a new journalism training center



Photo: USAID/AMDEP

Members of the Hirat leading media take part in a media sales training workshop at the newly established Hirat Journalism Training Center.

USAID is working to enable Afghan media to more effectively inform citizen about the political process, solve community problems, and advocate for good governance from their leaders.

Media is fundamental to building a strong, democratic Afghan nation, particularly during this time of transition. In the western province of Hirat, there are now more than 30 media outlets operating including radio, TV, online, and print publications. However, despite the growth in the popularity of the media, there has not been a corresponding increase in professional training courses for journalists to ensure quality keeps up with quantity. Journalism skills are often self-taught or out-dated and programming income drives content over audience needs.

Although Hirat University is renowned for its journalism faculty, there are few opportunities for budding journalists to practice their chosen craft in a vocational education context, with a peer group of practicing local journalists.

However, this is beginning to change with the opening of the new USAID-funded Journalism Training Center in Hirat in June 2011. The training center offers a standardized professional curriculum of practical based training in radio journalism, TV journalism, and journalism essentials.

"It was one of my life dreams to be on the radio and now it is real and I can make my audio story all by myself," said Fatima, one of the youngest trainees of the Hirat Journalism Training Center.

As media freedom comes with inherent responsibilities, such as the practice of internationally accepted ethical standards, the center also trains journalists in these standards and imparts the importance of ethical behavior in the journalism profession.

"The journalists in the provinces are often the last to receive training and support to enable them to do their jobs well. This vocational training center gives them the chance to network and improve their skills, leading to improved, and more relevant local media," said Mujeeb Khalvatgar, director of Nai, an Afghan non-governmental organization that also operates journalism training centers in Kabul, Jalalabad, and Mazar-e-Sharif.